13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Ireland has so often been symbolized by a bare-footed colleen bashfully hiding behind a creel-carrying donkey that it comes as a shock to discover that the animal is a relative novelty in the Irish scene. There is no evidence of the use of the ass as a beast of burden in Ireland until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Professor Mahaffy, who wrote learnedly 'On the Introduction of the Ass as a Beast of Burden into Ireland',[1] pointed out that the little donkey was conquering Hibernia when the Great Duke was subduing Iberia. In fact asses came in to replace the Irish horses which were being drawn on in large numbers to maintain the British cavalry in the peninsular wars. Although they were apparently introduced, like so many other novelties, by way of Scotland, they proved unsuited to the comparative rigours of the climate of the northern coasts of Ireland, and it was in the west of the country that they fitted best into the physical and social environment. It is strange to reflect that a culture-trait so well adapted to a region which has ancient physical and human relations with Iberia should have been so long in reaching Lusitanian Ireland and should have got there by the back door, through Ulster.

Down to recent times, then, the horse—a pony, not a heavy cart horse—was the universal draught animal and beast of burden save where poverty or environmental difficulties imposed carrying duties on men, women and children. There were places such as soft bogs or slippery seashores where even pack-horses could not find a footing, and there went the women and children with their back-creels to carry the peats and sea-wrack. In spring, when the men were fully occupied with ridge-making, the transport of manure seems to have been the special task of the women, though in time the ass came to relieve them of this duty. The manure creels or pots (pardogs) of a fashion which has been recorded all along the Atlantic coastlands from Spain to Scotland, have a hinged or slip bottom which allows the load to be dropped where required (Fig. 56). Nowadays the creels are hung in pairs on the donkey's wooden straddle (pack saddle), and in the west it is no uncommon sight to see convoys of asses so laden picking their way from the dung-hill to the fields. I have also seen hay being transported by hanging

[1] *P.R.I.A.*, 33 (1916–17), 580–8.

 [Text continues on p. 170]